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SUBJECT: GEORGIA/RUSSIA: GERMANS PROMOTE REVISED UNOMIG
MANDATE

REF: USUN 1181

Classified By: Ambassador Alejandro Wolff for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. The German Mission to the UN is advocating a beefed-up mandate for the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) when the current mandate expires on February 15, 2009. Germany hopes Security Council members will corner Russia into agreeing to extend authorization for a military observer mission in Abkhazia, but with new responsibilities including police training, IDP returns and humanitarian assistance. In a recent meeting with the German DPR, Ambassador Wolff encouraged the Germans to coordinate their efforts closely with the UN-OSCE-EU co-chairs of the Geneva-based talks on Georgia security arrangements. He also suggested to Ney that another technical rollover of UNOMIG may prove to be the best way to keep the focus on the Geneva discussions. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) German Deputy PermRep Martin Ney shared with Ambassador Wolff on December 23, Germany's "Food for Thought" non-paper, containing ideas for a revised UNOMIG mandate. Ambassador Ney advocated three "redlines" for a revised UNOMIG mandate: a UN mission would need to be deployed on both sides of the boundary between Georgia and Abkhazia; the revised mission (including the name of the mission) would need to avoid suggesting a new status for Abkhazia; and it would need to be a "substantial" mission rather than another technical extension of the current mission. Clarifying the third point, Ney suggested there should continue to be a security mechanism similar to the current observer mission, in order to ensure stability. Ney suggested the observers could patrol the same zone as the current UNOMIG mission does (as defined by the now-defunct Moscow Agreement), thereby avoiding a protracted negotiation over the observer's new zone of responsibility. He also suggested a new civilian or police component could be established that would engage in police training, and that the mission should leverage other UN agencies to assist in the return of IDPs and the provision of humanitarian services.

¶3. (C) Ney believes the "Western Friends" (France, Germany, the U.K. and U.S.) need to come to a shared understanding soon on what sort of UN mission we would like to see in Abkhazia, since the current UNOMIG mandate will expire on February 15. To that end, Ney said Germany had proposed Caucasus Directors from Western Friends' capitals meet in Berlin on January 12 to reach agreement on the elements of a new mandate. Germany would then present the Western Friends proposal to Russia. Ney said he believes Moscow has an interest in working out a sensible "modus vivendi" with the West that would allow for orderly life and more local development in Abkhazia. He thought a unified stance from the Western Friends would convince Russia that "they cannot win on the status issue" in the Security Council, and could also force Moscow to accept an observer mission on both sides of the boundary between Abkhazia and Georgia proper. German PermRep Mattusek had floated with Russian Permrep Churkin the idea of a "substantial resolution" in February, and Churkin

"was not totally opposed," Ney said. The Germans have also talked to French and U.K. PermReps, who were considering the ideas. In parallel to the Berlin meeting, Ney suggested that the New York-based Ambassadors of the Western Friends should develop a plan for pursuing the new SC resolution.

14. (C) Wolff asked whether the Germans had coordinated their thinking with the EU, OSCE, and UN Geneva co-chairs. Ney did not know, but said he thought Berlin had not engaged in detailed discussions with the co-chairs. The German Mission in New York had shared the Food for Thought paper with UN SRSG Johan Verbeke in early December. Wolff also noted that Germany's non-paper only addressed the UN mandate in Abkhazia and wondered whether South Ossetia needed to be part of the discussion, given Russia's decision to prevent consensus on extension of the OSCE mandate in South Ossetia, and since ignoring South Ossetia could grant indirect legitimacy to the status quo there. Wolff also agreed it is important to determine what sort of mandate we want and to utilize the upcoming UNOMIG renewal process to help us get there. He thought it would be valuable for the New York-based Ambassadors of the "Western Friends" to meet in advance of a Berlin meeting to lay the groundwork for discussions.

15. (C) Considering how to proceed on a new resolution, Wolff suggested we would need to determine whether a new UN mandate is worth the potential price we could pay. Russia will likely try to force the West to negotiate directly with Abkhaz authorities, he said, which could implicitly confer on them a new status. We would need to determine to what extent the Abkhaz want a continued UN presence in Abkhazia, since the Abkhaz position would influence the Russian position.

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Wolff suggested we should consider another technical rollover for UNOMIG in February, as it might be the best option for circumventing Russian efforts to push the Security Council into accepting a new reality for Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

16. (C) In a separate conversation with DepPolcouns and Poloff, Georgian DPR Irakli Chikovani said Georgia would like a UN presence to continue in Georgia/Abkhazia, but made clear he believes the current UNOMIG mission is incapable of fulfilling its mandate. Georgia is hoping to achieve another 3-4 month technical rollover in order to buy more time for the Geneva-based security talks to make progress on security arrangements. Chikovani believed that Russia would try to prevent a technical rollover, or use it as leverage to extract concessions from the West on the appearance of Abkhaz de facto authorities in New York for a Security Council meeting or Arria-format meeting. Chikovani had not considered whether a UN mandate should cover South Ossetia as well as Abkhazia. He thought the most important security issue for Georgia was the Russian occupation of the Akhalkalaki region of South Ossetia and the expulsion of ethnic Georgians from the Region after the end of the August conflict, but had no suggestion for advancing that item for further Security Council consideration.

COMMENT

17. (C) We may want to pursue another short technical rollover of UNOMIG when the mandate expires on February 15. This would give additional time for the Geneva-based security discussions to make progress on security arrangements and IDP returns for the conflict areas in both South Ossetia and Abkhazia. A short delay in revising the UN mandate would also allow the UN and EU to more closely coordinate consideration of next steps, since the EU will undertake a review of the future of its EU Monitoring Mission in late March. We understand from our Secretariat contacts that Foreign Minister Lavrov told the Secretary-General in December Russia would not accept another UNOMIG technical rollover in February. Instead, Russia would insist on either a redefined

mandate or no mandate at all. This might be a Russian tactic, as Chikovani suggested, to extract agreement from us to allow the appearance of the defacto Abkhaz authorities in New York. If the P3 1 are united in our pursuit of another technical rollover and clear about our redlines, Russia may choose not to block Council action. However, should Russia decide it is willing to take the heat for blocking a technical rollover, we may need to pursue a resolution for a revised UN mandate in Georgia. In this regard, the German initiative to discuss our preferred outcome among may prove timely.

Khalilzad